



## EDITORIAL: THE HINDU

**GENERAL STUDIES 3: INTERNAL SECURITY**  
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### Responding to the terror attack in Pahalgam

#### Context: A Calculated Act of Terrorism

- The terrorist attack in **Pahalgam**, Jammu and Kashmir, was not a random act of violence but a **strategically timed political signal**.
- It occurred just as the Kashmir Valley reopened for tourism and during the visit of **U.S. Vice President J.D. Vance**, indicating an attempt to draw international attention and disrupt the image of stability.
- The attack is part of a **pattern of cross-border terrorism** allegedly directed by the **Pakistani military-intelligence complex**.

#### Target and Symbolism: Undermining the Peace Narrative

- The attack took place in **Baisaran**, a serene tourist spot dubbed “Mini Switzerland,” known for its natural beauty and peaceful ambiance.
- Striking this location was intended to **tarnish the image of Kashmir as a safe tourist destination**, undermining efforts to promote normalcy.
- This act of terror was an **attack on the idea of peace and reintegration**, not just an act of physical violence.

#### Security and Intelligence Failure

- The attack reflects a **critical lapse in security preparedness**, particularly in a region that serves as a **gateway to the Amarnath Yatra**.
- Despite India’s heavy investment in **electronic surveillance and drone monitoring**, no effective early warning or deterrence was visible.
- Although not as colossal as the **Kargil intelligence failure**, the societal and psychological impact may be equally profound.

#### Perpetrators and Modus Operandi

- The attack was claimed by **The Resistance Front**, a known proxy of **Lashkar-e-Taiba**, with operational backing from **Pakistan’s ISI**.
- These groups maintain **deniability** while inflicting pain, destabilizing Kashmir, and provoking Indian retaliation.



- Despite international scrutiny, **Pakistan faces minimal consequence**, perpetuating a **favorable environment for terrorism**.

## India's Strategic Challenge: From Reaction to Deterrence

- India's response must shift from **episodic retaliation to long-term deterrence**.
- This requires:
  - **Political consensus across administrations**
  - **Institutional memory**
  - **Sustained diplomatic and intelligence efforts**
- **Strategic patience**, not emotional outbursts, is Pakistan's weakness and India's potential strength.

## Reframing Deterrence: Policy, Not Posturing

- Deterrence is not merely about punitive action but about **credible, cumulative costs** that shape adversary behavior.
- India's **occasional military strikes (Uri 2016, Balakot 2019)** are necessary but insufficient as standalone responses.
- India must build **"escalatory credibility"** — the perceived capacity and will to impose pain when red lines are crossed.

## Policy Tools for Deterrence

- Possible strategies include:
  - **Diplomatic isolation** of Pakistan on global forums
  - **Reconsideration of trade and Indus Waters Treaty mechanisms**
  - **Expansion of covert capabilities** to disrupt terrorist bases across the LoC
- These are **standard tools of statecraft**, already used by global powers, and not acts of recklessness.

## Pakistan's Internal Dynamics and Escalatory Doctrine

- Pakistan is **economically strained, politically unstable, and socially fragmented**.
- In such times, the **military uses Kashmir conflict as a tool** to regain control and deflect public discontent.



- **General Asim Munir**, Pakistan's current army chief and former ISI head, is known for his **aggressive, risk-prone posture**.
- Munir appears to be reviving the doctrine of **"managed escalation"** — calculated violence under the nuclear threshold.

## Historical Pattern of Military-led Provocations

- Every phase of **internal turmoil in Pakistan** has coincided with escalations in Kashmir:
  - **Kargil War (1999)** under Musharraf
  - **Parliament attack (2001)** during civil-military tensions
  - **Mumbai attacks (2008), Uri (2016), Pulwama (2019)** — all part of asymmetric warfare campaigns
- These were not isolated events but **strategically driven confrontations** initiated by Pakistan's military.

## Tourism as a Target: Disrupting Symbolic Recovery

- Kashmir tourism symbolizes **economic revival and national reintegration**.
- By attacking tourists, terrorists aim to:
  - Cut off the Valley from the rest of India
  - **Sabotage employment and opportunity** for locals
  - Perpetuate **alienation and fear**
- This was not just an attack on people, but on **Kashmir's potential to heal and prosper**.

## Kashmiri People as Victims, Not Perpetrators

- The **local population is not complicit** in such violence. Instead, they are its **first and most frequent victims**.
- **Youth aspirations** in Kashmir today lean towards **education, jobs, and peace**, not militancy.
- Narratives that stereotype Kashmiris as terror sympathizers are **counterproductive and factually incorrect**.
- **Inclusive engagement and development** are critical for long-term peace.

## Internal Response: Beyond Repression

- India's internal response must avoid **repressive measures** that alienate citizens.





- Instead, the focus should be on:
  - **Continued economic investment**
  - **Empathetic political engagement**
  - **Social integration through education and opportunity**
- Building trust is **strategically wise and morally just**.

## Leveraging the Diplomatic Moment: U.S. Vice President's Visit

- Vice President J.D. Vance's presence in India offers a **rare diplomatic window**.
- India should seek:
  - **Clearer statements from the U.S. on state-sponsored terrorism**
  - **Stronger pressure on Pakistan's global enablers**
- Sympathy after an attack is appreciated, but **preventive international action** is far more meaningful.

## Conclusion: A Call for Clarity and Consequence

- The Pahalgam massacre must not become **another data point in a history of terror**.
- India must **move beyond outrage to credible strategy**.
- The only language that checks Pakistani adventurism is **the language of consequence**.
- This moment demands **strategic clarity, institutional resolve**, and a **measured yet firm response** rooted in statecraft, not sentiment.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/responding-to-the-terror-attack-in-pahalgam/article69481973.ece>